

## Response

Claims 1-11 have been deleted. Claims 12-21 have been amended and new Claim 22 has been added. Claims 12 and 22 are the only independent claims. The new claim is supported by the original specification. The Examiner is authorized to charge any fees arising from the addition of the new claim to Deposit Account No. 10-0096.

The Examiner rejected Claims 12-19 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,709,016 (“Gulick”). Applicant traverses this rejection on the grounds that Gulick does not teach each and every element of amended Claims 12-19 or the newly added Claim 22.

Independent Claim 12 has been amended to clarify that the Applicant is claiming a casket assembly kit in unassembled form. The kit includes pre-fabricated panels formed of a composite base material such as wood chips and a binder. Significantly, at least one of the panels includes a veneer applied to the panel at the time of manufacture, i.e., before the casket is assembled. As set forth at Page 8 of the Specification, the invention, in-part, is that the pre-fabricated panels include a veneer finish that is separately applied to individual panels at the time the panels are respectively formed in a mold. As such, no veneer or other finish needs to be applied to the casket or a panel at the time the kit is assembled.

Gulick does not teach pre-fabricated panels that have been pre-finished with a veneer. In fact, Gulick teaches the opposite of this. At Col. 3, lines 45-51, Gulick states that “the casket constructed with hardboard can be finished with” a veneer. Clearly, to the extent Gulick can be relied on as teaching a veneer, it teaches a veneer that is applied after the casket is constructed. This significantly complicates fabrication efforts at the time the casket is assembled. Applicant’s unique

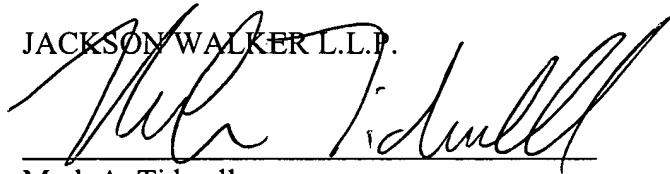
kit permits a veneer to be applied to individual panels before the casket is assembled, at the time a panel is fabricated, thereby truly minimizes final assembly efforts of the kit.

Moreover, Applicant teaches that preferably the veneer is comprised of a material perforated with a multiplicity of pin holes. This is preferable to permit a heating medium to pass through the veneer material to activate the binder/glue. Nothing in Gulick addresses such characteristics of a veneer, nor would the veneer of Gulick have such characteristics since the veneer is applied after the panels are fabricated and casket is assembled. Such characteristics as claimed by Applicant are only desirable to the extent the veneer is applied in the mold at the time the composite panel is formed.

For the foregoing reasons, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the refusal under Gulick and pass the claims to allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that this paper (along with any paper referred to as being attached or enclosed) is being deposited on the date shown below with the United States Postal Service, with sufficient postage as First Class Mail (37 CFR 1.8(a)), in an envelope addressed to Mail Stop Response/NO FEE, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA, 22313-1450.

Date: November 7, 2005

  
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